

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 31, 32, 44 and 45 as follows:

31. An Internet billing method for a plurality of customers and a plurality of vendors of products or services for transactions over the Internet between a purchasing customer of the plurality of customers and a selling vendor of the plurality of vendors, wherein, for each purchase transaction of a product or service between the purchasing customer and the selling vendor, a first amount is charged to the purchasing customer and a second amount is remitted to the selling vendor, the method comprising the steps by a third party to the purchase transaction of:

- a) establishing a billing agreement with the purchasing customer to permit the third party to charge the purchasing customer and to remit to a selling vendor for a purchase transaction;
- b) establishing a remitting agreement with the selling vendor to permit the third party to charge a purchasing customer and to remit to the selling vendor for a purchase transaction;
- c) receiving authorization over the Internet from the purchasing customer to charge the first amount to the purchasing customer without previously receiving a request from the selling vendor to charge the first amount to the purchasing customer;
- d) charging the first amount to the purchasing customer in accordance with the billing agreement; and
- e) remitting the second amount to the selling vendor in accordance with the remitting agreement.

32. An Internet billing method for a plurality of customers and a plurality of vendors of products or services for transactions over the Internet between a purchasing customer of the plurality of customers and a selling vendor of the plurality of vendors, wherein, for each purchase transaction of a product or service between the purchasing customer and the selling vendor, a first amount is charged to the purchasing customer and a second amount is remitted to the selling vendor, the method comprising the steps by a third party to the purchase transaction of:

- a) establishing a billing agreement with the purchasing customer to permit the third party to charge the purchasing customer and to remit to a selling vendor for a purchase transaction;

- b) establishing a remitting agreement with the selling vendor to permit the third party to charge a purchasing customer and to remit to the selling vendor for a purchase transaction;
- c) providing a communications link over the Internet between the purchasing customer and the selling vendor to permit the purchasing customer to request information from the selling vendor with respect to a product or service;
- d) receiving authorization over the Internet from the purchasing customer to charge the first amount to the purchasing customer without previously receiving a request from the selling vendor to charge the first amount to the purchasing customer;
- e) charging the first amount to the purchasing customer in accordance with the billing agreement; and
- f) remitting the second amount to the selling vendor in accordance with the remitting agreement.

44. An Internet billing method for a plurality of customers and a plurality of vendors of products or services for transactions over the Internet between a purchasing customer of the plurality of customers and a selling vendor of the plurality of vendors, wherein, for each purchase transaction of a product or service between the purchasing customer and the selling vendor, a first amount is charged to the purchasing customer and a second amount is remitted to the selling vendor, the method comprising the steps by a financial services company of:

- a) establishing a billing agreement with the purchasing customer to permit the financial services company to charge the purchasing customer and to remit to a selling vendor for a purchase transaction;
- b) establishing a remitting agreement with the selling vendor to permit the financial services company to charge a purchasing customer and to remit to the selling vendor for a purchase transaction;
- c) receiving authorization over the Internet from the purchasing customer to charge the first amount to the purchasing customer without previously receiving a request from the selling vendor to charge the first amount to the purchasing customer;
- d) charging the first amount to the purchasing customer in accordance with the billing agreement by charging a bank account, a credit card account, or an account with the financial services company; and

e) remitting the second amount to the selling vendor in accordance with the remitting agreement without previously transmitting a credit card account number of the purchasing customer over the Internet to the selling vendor and without previously transmitting a bank account number of the purchasing customer over the Internet to the selling vendor.

45. An Internet billing method for a plurality of customers and a plurality of vendors of products or services for transactions over the Internet between a purchasing customer of the plurality of customers and a selling vendor of the plurality of vendors, wherein, for each purchase transaction of a product or service between the purchasing customer and the selling vendor, a first amount is charged to the purchasing customer and a second amount is remitted to the selling vendor, the method comprising the steps by a financial services company of:

- a) establishing a billing agreement with the purchasing customer to permit the financial services company to charge the purchasing customer and to remit to a selling vendor for a purchase transaction;
- b) establishing a remitting agreement with the selling vendor to permit the financial services company to charge a purchasing customer and to remit to the selling vendor for a purchase transaction;
- c) providing a communications link over the Internet through equipment of the financial services company between the purchasing customer and the selling vendor to permit the purchasing customer to request information from the selling vendor with respect to a product or service;
- d) receiving authorization over the Internet from the purchasing customer to charge the first amount to the purchasing customer without previously receiving a request from the selling vendor to charge the first amount to the purchasing customer;
- e) charging the first amount to the purchasing customer in accordance with the billing agreement by charging a bank account, a credit card account, or an account with the financial services company; and
- f) remitting the second amount to the selling vendor in accordance with the remitting agreement without previously transmitting a credit card account number of the purchasing customer over the Internet to the selling vendor and without previously transmitting a bank account number of the purchasing customer over the Internet to the selling vendor.